

THE BATTLE OF THE PLOUGHSHARES.

PRICE, PROFIT, AND RENT:

THEIR MUTUAL RELATION IN THE

PROSPECTS OF BRITISH AGRICULTURE.

BY

A LANDOWNER AND A FARMER.

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“ ‘The purpose you undertake is *dangerous*: too great for the counterpoise of so great an opposition.’ ‘Say you so! But I tell you, my Lord Fool, that out of this nettle *Danger* we pluck this flower *Safety*!’ ”

Hen. IV., Pt. 1, Act II.

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PRICE, PROFIT, AND RENT.

THERE is an old saying, "Man's necessity is God's opportunity," the meaning of which, interpreted in accordance with Natural Laws, appears to be, that when a man has done kicking and struggling and doing his utmost to drown himself in the waters of affliction, the very exhaustion of his own suicidal efforts is often found to save him from the catastrophe which his previous conduct was surely hastening: as we used sometimes to hear it said, when people were in the habit of riding on Stage-coaches, that if death or danger stare you in the face outside a boat that has been capsized, or a coach that is going to be, the safest thing to do is to *do nothing* but 'keep quiet and stick to the Vehicle.'

Indeed this steady and self-commending advice of the 'Brighton Coachman,' appears far from inapposite to the present critical-seeming juncture for that large and respectable part of the community who put themselves down as 'connected with Agriculture.' The utter and sudden abandonment

of a system of financial policy which has been in undisturbed, though varied, operation and respect, for the last thirty years, and though originating in the uninspired wisdom of George Canning and Charles Grant, has been guarded and enshrined rather with the religious jealousy due to some sacred Relic, than as a fabric bearing the infirm stamp of human ingenuity—the explosion, I say, of this bubble, after the pertinacious blowing of so many mouths, for so many years, may well cause a little consternation in the minds of men; whether, (according to their tone of intellect,) from astonishment that it should ever have evaporated, or that it should ever have endured so long.

I remember being taken, in the Island of Madeira, to see a Cliff which rises in perpendicular escarpment to the stupendous height of two thousand feet out of the sea, and presents as clean a section from top to bottom as if it had been sliced by a guillotine, shewing such regular horizontal bands of geological strata, that one could almost fancy it a suggestion of ‘Nature’s own’ for the pattern of a waistcoat: about midway up there was a little shred of a thing like a bit of white chip clinging to the naked rock, as if it did not exactly belong to it, or know what business it had there, but was *afraid to let go*, from such a desperate height, with the Atlantic boiling in the hideous chasm below. On enquiry I was told that it was the solitary remnant and sad record of a human attempt to quarry a beautiful vein of red granite

that ran along the middle of the cliff, by means of *a long series of scaling-ladders pinned to the face of the rock by iron staples from the sea-line upwards*: but that after quarrying successfully a sufficient quantity to build half a church, one disastrous blast prematurely ignited, sent a hundred and fifty pious Catholics and all their ladders, save this one, on such a downward errand, that they had time to count their beads to every Saint, and prepare themselves for Heaven, before they touched the Earth, or rather in their case, the Waters under it. I know not by what queer and involuntary analogy of thought it is that since the threatened demolition of the Sliding-scale, that blessed invention of man to save Providence the trouble of regulating the supply and price of corn to Englishmen, my mind's eye, wearied of wandering over the promised waste of plough-deserted acres and a bisected Rental, has glanced back with strange pertinacity to that sublime but ill-fated Rock, and has confused, dream-like, the shred of 'Protection' that the Session of 1846 will leave behind it, with that remnant of a goodly line of scaling-ladders hanging, like an epitaph, upon the marble face of Cabo Girão: or why the question, after the lapse of many years, should occur again to my mind, that I put to my companion, a clever Portuguese, (now a leading member of the Cortes) "Why they didn't commence operations *from the top*, which was readily attainable on the land side, and where the ladders could be well secured, and let down the stone by pullies? He

looked brightly at me for a moment, and then with a clouded face, and replying in French, for reasons that were standing around us, said, "Dieu ! Je ne sais pas, à moins que de faire rien que de travers, comme nous," 'God knows ! but the Portuguese begin everything at the wrong end !'

This was indeed, as Mark Tapley says, "dreadful true:" but I hope to shew in the course of a few pages, that there are still besides the Portuguese some other Nations upon earth, too dangerous to name, who do sometimes make mistakes not unanalogous with the sliding-scale—I beg pardon, the climbing-scale I mean—of these poor masons.

For thirty years *We* too have been climbing and 'scaling' after a *hopeless quarry*. Ignorant of the fact that *Price is a Result and not a Cause*, we have been making laws to keep up—or if you please, to keep steady—the price of the greatest and most important article of commerce in the world, from the ludicrous idea that by raising the price we could raise the profit ! just as a child sticks a full-blown flower into its garden by the stalk, expecting it to grow, unaware that its beauty and fragrance are *the effect* of a mysterious but natural and wholesome process of vegetable action, and that if he wants the pretty flower he must plant the ugly root.

Profit, which is the object of all trade, *has no permanent dependance on the price of the article* : it has not even a direct relation with it : for the profit will sometimes be as great, or even greater, when the

price is lowered, in consequence either of some new invention, or better economy of production, or the successful application of capital on a larger scale, either of which three causes will enable the producer to sell the article at a lower price, and yet obtain more profit. This is a matter of daily instance, before our very eyes, in every trade : and was never better shewn than it now is in Agriculture. If I drain a field which used to yield me twenty bushels to the acre, and by an outlay of five pounds to the acre (the ordinary cost of drainage) make it yield me thirty, (by no means an uncommon increase) with the same quantity of seed manure and labour ; it is a mere matter of calculation to see that I can afford to sell that corn much cheaper than before, (after deducting the interest of my expended capital), and yet realize a far greater profit ; and what is more, could afford to pay a better rent. This may be such a startling paradox to those who have never much considered the subject before, that I must beg leave to be a little tiresome and technical, by explaining in detail the evidence of the fact that *neither the Farmer's Profit nor the Landlord's Rent, depends upon THE PRICE OF CORN.*

I will first take the Evidence of Drainage, perhaps in our wet climate the most extensive and important of all, as the foundation of *increased produce on a limited space.* I have drained many fields, at an expense of between four and five pounds an acre, which previously denied nearly one third of their surface to the purposes of vegetation, through

the following cause. On land that has a clay sub-soil, it is an old practice extending over the greater part of England to elevate the soil by repeated ploughings, into ridges from five to ten yards wide. Six yards is a common width. The object is, to keep the ridges comparatively dry by making the Furrows that divide them, channels for the escape of the surface water, which trickling as from a low-pitched roof of a house, keeps that portion of the ridge which is near the Furrow in a state of perpetual saturation, increasing with the proximity to the channel of escape. The consequence is, that in many cases, for a yard's width next to the furrow, the seed either never germinates, or forms no head, or produces such a quality of grain as spoils the sample. In short, a yard on each side of every ridge is like waste ground at harvest-time, after receiving the same quantity of seed and labour as the rest, at sowing time: consequently two yards out of every six (i.e. one third of the whole field) are more or less unproductive, but as costly as the rest, and therefore a virtual drawback upon the profit of the two thirds that remain productive. I might show, for reasons too lengthy to enter upon except in an agricultural treatise, that even that grain which grows upon the drier part of the ridge is not of such quality or in such quantity as if the land had an even surface, as Nature intended. An application of capital to the extent of £5. an acre, in under-drainage, cures this evil, in point of fact, by *laying the furrow under ground*: from this

time the land can be laid level, the tillage of it becomes much lighter and more effective, can be continued in the winter as well as summer, two horses can do what four did before ; less manure, less seed, and less labour will produce greater crops of better quality, the turnip-crop can take the place of the bare summer-fallow,* and consequently more food for winter-stock is produced, and therefore more manure for future crops ; and what with the redeemed space, improved mechanical texture and chemical disposition of the soil, it is no uncommon result for the succeeding wheat crop to be *nearly doubled in quantity*. Supposing the general correctness of this description of drainage and its effects, which I do not think any farmer of a wet clay soil will dispute, can it be questioned that the produce of a field so improved, after paying the interest of the outlay, would leave the cultivator a greater profit, though sold at a great reduction of price ? To every agricultural improvement the same reasoning applies. Every improved implement, every new and cheaper or more effective manure, every new description of seed of more prolific qualities, every improved rotation-of-crops, every improvement to the texture or fertility of the soil ; every œconomy in the home-operations of the Farmery, by steam-power, compendious machinery, increased support for winter-stock, healthier modes of rearing and quicker modes of fattening—in a

* The expense of which alone, including the year's Rent, is estimated by farmers at £5. an acre.

word, *every advancement of the power of mind over matter, by the aids of science and of skill in its application*—tends to one common and providential end, increase of produce, and at the same time œconomy of production ; the elements at once of abundance and cheapness to the consumer, and of profit to the producer : and the greater the profit to the producer, *the more the land becomes worth to hire*, the larger therefore becomes the Rent per acre to the Landlord, as every acre becomes more productive to the Tenant ; and this in the very face of those causes which are thus, under the wisdom and beneficence of God, ever tending to make the produce cheaper. But mark ! the rapid increase of population, in a flourishing country,—and there are nearly a thousand additional mouths to feed every time the sun rises upon our own,—is constantly pressing upon this increasing supply, and keeping up the price that capital, science, and skill are ever tending to lower. *Price* therefore is merely a result ! It is the effect of a constantly progressive demand pressing upon a constantly increasing supply.

What then becomes of the childish policy that mistaking high prices for the cause of high profits, instead of seeing in them the result of an increasing demand, would madly diminish that demand by attempting to enhance artificially the price of the article ? The less capital and science are applied to Agriculture, the higher prices will remain and the more restricted the demand. Let capital and science have their full operation, and you will have higher

profits and larger rents, though *with a lower price of corn*. In fact the price of corn and the value of land, have a constant inverse tendency with respect to each other: the former getting cheaper as more can be grown on an acre, and the acre becoming more valuable as it becomes able to produce a greater crop. Increase your consumption by Trade and Commerce, and all those great national works that occasion employment and support population, and then you will keep up the price of corn as *the effect of an increasing demand*: but do not mistake the flower for the root, and imagine that by making in the first instance an artificial price of corn, you will improve the business of the farmer, or the resulting rent to the landowner.

One should suppose that the simple and eternal truth of such a principle as this was trite and visible, usque ad nauseam. In point of practice it is lamentably the reverse: but it is only one out of many instances moral and social as well as political, in which like the hasty child, mistaking effects for causes, we plant the gaudy flower instead of the flower-producing root, thinking in our greedy ignorance to substitute a more compendious human process for Nature's sure and fertile operations. But there is an universal analogy belonging to Truth. It is as sure in Politics as in Morals, that selfishness recoils upon itself. "More haste worse speed" might be written as the Commentary upon the whole history of those laws which, whether in 'Manufactures or Agriculture' (as if Agriculture were not a manufacture!) have been framed in sui-

cidal ignorance to enthrone High Price as the cause, instead of waiting for it as the effect, of Prosperity.

But this wearisome discussion is now likely to be set at rest for ever. The question for Agriculturists is no longer whether a ‘protected’ price be a blessing or a curse—whether human or divine laws are the surest agents of prosperity,—whether restricted or extended commerce be the best field for productive labour—whether *the area of the British Isles or of the whole world* be the best insurance-office for permanent steadiness of value, statistical equality of annual supply, and steady progression of demand,—whether it be the interest and duty of the wealthiest, the most industrial, most naval and commercial empire on the globe to set the example of closed or open ports,—these questions are consigned to the tomb of all the Capulets. The true question that remains to every rational and practical mind, that has the wisdom to look for the best of all prophecy in the history of the Past—is this, What are now the prospects of British Agriculture?

Is not Great Britain the first commercial kingdom upon earth, and Agriculture the first—the most essential—the greatest of all commerce. Its subject is the foremost of all human wants. “Give us this day our daily bread!” Its object is the supply of that which we are instructed even by Divine Command to pray for as our first and fundamental physical necessity, as coming in the divine order of Nature before everything else! The ‘Intellectual’ cannot devise, the ‘Moral’ cannot practise, till the

‘Physical’ be supplied. Let the Merchant, or the Capitalist, the lord of Mills or Mines, or the Railroad King, count with what pride he may the thousands that he employs and feeds, or the Millions that he owns, the profession of the humblest farmer comes in the truthful and everlasting order of Nature before his own. He may smile in his ephemeral elevation, at this Eternal Precedency; but he pays to it the best of all Tribute, the sincerest of all deference, in the daily fact that he cannot exist without it. Is it then a question of small moment to ask, What are now the prospects of such an interest as that of the British Agriculturist?

For thirty years we have been under A GREAT MISTAKE. Let it be granted! To err is human: and it is through the preference and reliance upon human wisdom that we have erred. To go further back is to go back to a period of War, when the “times are out of joint.” It is only during peace that political and social causes produce their natural effects undisturbed. Let us retrace that portion of our history that is really available for effective retrospect. During that period we have seen Agriculture the victim of every wind that blew, an uncertain Business, a gambling Trade, and therefore *an insecure investment for Capital on a large scale*. If harvests were good, the farmer was ruined by a home-glut: if bad, the commerce of the nation was paralyzed by the withdrawal of its circulating medium in a golden effort to reap where we had not

sown—to bring to life, impromptu, a foreign trade that we had legislated to smother. When we had a surplus, we could not sell out of doors, because we had barricaded our doors and windows, and raised an artificial atmosphere, whose lowest point seemed Fever-heat compared with the healthy temperature around us, which our timid blood shrunk from the encounter of, though protected as we were *by our natural clothing*. We forgot, or never knew, that the healthier warmth, the more genial glow was to be won by bold exertion in that free air that we dreaded, and under that universal sunshine that we had been shutting out. Weak and few as we thought ourselves, we failed to notice that every loaf that our formidable besiegers threw us from without, *caused more famine to them than plenty to us*. We resisted the irresistible conclusion that we might have derived from this single fact. When every Port in Europe was powerfully acted upon by our lightest demand, when the price-current of the granaries of Dantzic, Hamburgh, Königsburg, Stettin, in the North, and Odessa in the South, sunk and rose with the most pulse-like responsiveness to every fickle throb from the Heart and Centre of the demand and supply of the world, we still shut our eyes to the self-evident conclusion that those whom we had such enormous power to influence must have little power to act upon us, and that for every shilling they could pull down our ‘Prices,’ the effort must raise their own in a five-fold ratio. We did not believe this. No, no ! our mistrustful eye,

cunning but not wise, wandered in morbid imagination over the unsolicited fecundity of the banks of the Vistula, and pictured to our pockets a Conspiracy of Nations to burst our granaries with corn grown without labour on fields cultivated without cost! Such was our belief; and some of us (God save the mark!) believe it still: and knit the thoughtful brow, and shake the sapient head, at the solemn prospect of a Russian invasion of serf-threshed corn, more poisonous than slave-grown sugar! “Daring Pen!” I hear them mutter, “that after the agricultural experience of years, that should have taught you the discretionary part of valour, venture to stick your Rick-ribbon on a May-pole, and shout your solitary and feeble defiance to the frightful rivalry of the Transylvanian Plough! do you not know that the poorest country can always grow corn the cheapest?”

“No, i’faith! I lack some of thy instinct!” It has always appeared to me, on the contrary, that in every competition of trade the weakest go to the wall! that Capital and Industry and Skill, tax and torture them how you may, can undersell poverty, and idleness, and ignorance. I was brought up in the orthodox creed that ‘one Englishman can beat three Frenchmen,’ to say nothing of Russians and Bohemians: and as Swords are out of fashion now, of course I ‘turn it on’ to Ploughshares; for it would be a pity not to realize upon something so pleasant an abstraction. So if you want to know the whole English of my opinion, I’ll tell you what it is. That

in a very few years from "this ignorant present time," England will be the Corn-mart, as she is already the Money-mart, of the world. For what is money but the representative of corn, the first and chiefest thing that man must exchange it for ; and in which, try what else he may, he is bound by the Law of Nature, to measure its ultimate and effective value. And what have we been doing for thirty years ? trying to invert the natural order of things, and make money the governor of corn instead of corn the governor of money. And what has been the success of our attempt ? to dislocate every joint and knuckle of our corn and money-market too, and subject ourselves to reiterating and ruinous alternations in each, producing disastrous variations of cent. per cent. in their struggle, against the blind perversity of man, to recover their relative and respective value ; involving themselves and each other in an enforced perplexity and mystery of cross-relation which not even the twin-arrogance of 'Gemini,' the Castor and Pollux of the Brummagem Philosophy, with their sharp eyes for a Mare's-nest, could disentangle, to their own, much less the world's, intelligence.

What then will be the first effect of our abandonment of this contracted policy, by the announcement to the world that we have shaken off the nightmare of ignorant apprehension, this visionary bird of Panic, that has brooded so long over the waving Corn-fields of England ;—that, taxed as we are, we are ready to meet them in a 'fair field and no favor,'

and to beat them in Agriculture as, in spite of these same taxes, we have beaten them in everything else? ‘When the lion wakes, the forest trembles.’ The quotations of prices-current will instantly rise at every Corn-port in Europe, never to sink again as the closed warehouses of England have made them sink before.—But this will make *their* prices higher? To be sure it will! it will make the price of *everything* higher abroad, and so compel ‘the foreigner’ (hateful word! as if the interest of all nations was not *identical*, if they only knew it!) to meet us in the great struggle of Capital applied to every art and every business that produce the necessaries, the comforts, or the luxuries of human life. True, *so long as we remain an importing nation*, our corn-prices will ever remain higher than those of exporting countries. Our prices will be the prices of the world, plus the expense of shipment, freight, transshipment, harbour-dues, and warehouse-expenses, besides the importer’s profit. But how long will that continue? Why until our Capital, Science, and Skill, overtaking even our own immensely advancing population and increasing demand, shall beat ‘the foreigner’ on his own ground, as we did at Cressy, Blenheim, and Waterloo, as we have done in Cotton, Silk, and Woollen, and everything else, except Politeness, which we hope to do. ‘But to beat them in corn-growing, we must be able to undersell them, and that can only be done by *low prices*?’ (“*Still harping on my daughter!*”) Why to be sure we

must! But have I not shewn that every application of capital to land tends to this, by increasing the produce, and with it the farmer's profit and the landlord's rent? When were the gigantic fortunes made in cotton and our other national trades? When invention, and ingenuity, and capital had cheapened the article and increased the customers a thousand-fold. For every rich man that has bread enough, there are thousands and tens of thousands of poor ones that have *not enough*. What is true of bread, was only *less urgently true of cotton-stockings*: and is true of everything else that hands can produce and money can buy. 'But the productive powers of land are limited?' Are they so? Who says so? I have myself raised five-and-thirty bushels to an acre on land that before produced but fifteen of inferior quality, by an outlay of £5. to an acre in a *permanent* improvement: and how many millions of acres are there in England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, which only want the same expenditure to produce the same results? But let it not be replied that wet lands alone (though that admission were quite enough) are capable of this increase. Let the Cottagers and Allotment-Tenants of England say whether they have not grown on their quarter-acre, by a greater *proportion* of manure, and deeper and better cultivation, at the rate of three times per acre the ordinary produce of the neighbourhood. They are in respect of their few square yards of earth, greater Capitalists in labour and manure, than most of us

are who cultivate acres by the hundred or thousand. It is this, and not 'the spade,' that makes the difference. And the rents they pay are notoriously high. The limit to the productive capabilities of the soil was never found yet, and never will be.

"What, if any," says one of our agricultural periodicals this year, "will be the effects of the expected change, not upon class or person, but upon agricultural *practice*? It might seem almost presumptuous to ask or guess, almost idle to dilate upon, had we nothing but surmise or conjecture to proceed upon or offer. But we have more. We have the history of past practice: of the causes, of every description, that have operated to retard or to advance its improvement. And in the review which presents itself, our eye is caught by one or two leading features that have ever and anon solicited our attention and claimed our repeated remark throughout our progress in the journey we have traversed. One is the utterly disproportionate application of capital to agriculture, as compared with all the other great objects of human enterprise, and investments of human labour and invention; the other is a matter of closer detail, and lying more out of a cursory view, but powerfully significant; it may be comprised in the proposition that the farmer's attention has been hitherto called rather to *the price that he can obtain for a given quantity, than the amount that he can grow upon a given space*. We affirm with regret this proposition, and we appeal to our readers if the remark be not true in reference to the past; and if true, whether it do not betoken *a screw loose somewhere* in the movement of the agricultural machine, interrupting its due and proper action, and distorting it from its due and proper object and purpose as the means of producing *an indefinitely increasing supply to a constantly increasing demand*.

"Observe the effects of the application of capital and invention to other arts. They shew themselves in improved machinery, greater produce, *lower price, and increased profits*! Is

this true or is it not ? as a practical and striking fact, is it true or is it not, that the fortunes made by cotton-spinning and calico-printing have increased and extended enormously since the improved machinery and œconomised labour have multiplied the produce and reduced the price to an extent astonishing to contemplate ? Is it true or is it not, that the double blessing of lower price to the consumer and greater profit to the producer, have gone hand in hand ? And if it be true, as it is well known to be, that *profit does not depend upon price*, in regard to that which we “put on;” why should it be otherwise in regard to that which we “eat and drink ?” Why should that which is an axiom to the one be a paradox to the other ? Both are trades in which capital invests itself in human labour, employed through the medium of machinery upon the task of production. Why should a truth which is positive to the Loom be negative to the Plough ? The productive capabilities of each are alike unknown, and as far as human knowledge has reached, unlimited ; the latter perhaps more surely than the former. What is the chilling cause that arrests investment in the elder branch of human art,—agriculture,—and sells its birthright to the younger,—manufactures ? We pause for a reply, but it is the pause not of fear but of hope ; of hope not illuded by future expectations, but founded upon past experience : and truly the experience of the past ten years has been instructive beyond all former retrospect. With a population increasing at the astounding rate of nearly a thousand a day, a thousand mouths to feed each day beyond the number of the day before ; with the acreage of our little island cut and sliced, and taken up in every direction by the overbearing Railroad, that swallows two thousand acres to a hundred miles, how have we met the increased and increasing demand ? By largely increased importation ? Evidently not. Have our fields then grown larger ? No : but they have *produced more*. The example of the few, and the encouragement of that example and its results, have not been lost. The movement is but in its infancy, but it bids fair to

attain a stature that shall vindicate its place among the rapid and gigantic growths that modern times have seen in other arts, and exemplify the scientific and æconomic truths that their progress has established."*

One little circumstance, in the agricultural history of the past year alone, may perhaps be adduced in illustration of the likelihood of this expectation. In this one year the farmers of Great Britain imported *one hundred and thirty-seven thousand three hundred* tons of Guano, at an expense of a million and a quarter sterling! This was of course independent of many other manures annually imported, besides the usual supplies of our own farm-yards. The peculiar value of this manure (guano) lies in its extreme portability, and its consequent application to distant fields, or to hill-sides inaccessible to the ponderous dung-cart. It seemed incredible till proved by actual experience, that a sufficient quantity of this inestimable fertilizer could be conveyed in a single wheelbarrow to manure far more effectively a space of land which would have required eight or ten cart-loads of Farm-Yard Manure drawn up hill by three horses. By its use a single man does in an hour what would otherwise have required three horses and a man a whole day: and besides this saving of labour, the quantity required to manure an acre costs about one-fifth of the supposed expense (for nobody knows it) of that supplied from the yard: and it will be borne in mind that the crops it

* Agricultural Gazette, Jan. 3rd, 1846.

raises, upon the outlying or hilly fields of a Farm, almost out of reach of manure before, are a permanent boon to the future cultivation, by the straw left behind from this extra produce. The importation of this and other manures, is precisely analogous to that of raw cotton or any other produce required and worked up by our manufacturers, by which they have supplied and undersold with the manufactured article the markets of the very countries from whence it was imported. How is this accomplished? By our superiority in capital, industry, and skill. Does any true friend to Agriculture desire that it alone should remain an exception to our victorious course in every other art? or prefer to believe that there is any inherent and anomalous peculiarity in the manufacture of Corn that is to make it for ever a contradiction to the principles that apply to them? Our present agricultural position, our present production, paltry as it is to what it might be, is a practical refutation of the equally unfounded and unpatriotic assumption. Can the Iron-works of Liege or Huys furnish a plough to compete with Howard of Bedford, or Ransome of Ipswich? Do the plains of Hungary or Pultowa crumble to dust under such an Implement as 'Crosskill's Clod-crusher,' which epitomizes the work of days into half as many hours? or yield their stubborn virtues to such persuasive arguments as those of the 'Uley Cultivator' or 'Reid's Sub-pulverizer?' Can the bruited names of Thäer and Liebig (all honour to them notwithstanding!) stand alone against the

gifted tongues and pens of Johnstone, Playfair, Buckland, Daubeny, Henslow, Pusey, Morton, Rham, Hillyard, and a dozen more ardent Pioneers of Agricultural Science who can scarcely keep a-head of the van of practical experimentalists that are crowding our periodicals with their valued offerings to the Infant Art? The very questions suggest their own answer: for they shew that our manufacturing skill has already begun to address itself to Agriculture with such power, that we are already perhaps (if we only knew it!) the most advanced among the Nations, both in Mechanical and Chemical Agriculture. Then why not let us know it? Why box ourselves up from the rest of mankind, as if, after beating them in every other art, we shrunk from facing them in this? The truth is, that the agriculturists as a body do not know their own power. We have distrusted it for thirty years, and are diffident of ourselves from want of practice in the wide and healthy field of human competition. We are separated from each other by our acres, and do not act together and learn our united force, with the esprit de corps which nerves and animates the more social and concentrated energies of our manufacturing brethren, and makes their efforts irresistible. We have substituted a reciprocally injurious and disastrous home-competition in our childish attempt to shut out the common and legitimate object of our emulation. Let any body who doubts this, read the admirable joint-enquiry of Mr. Morton and Mr.

Trimmer, recently published. The names of such writers are a guarantee as well for the capability and fidelity of their research, as for the practical value of their conclusions: and they show by a close and quantitative system of analysis, that would drive conviction into a gate-post, that instead of making 'the foreigner' pay duty to us, we are paying duty to each other. Peter who farms a Barley Soil in Norfolk, pays duty for his Bread, and every Bean he gives his horses, to Paul who can grow nothing else on his stiff clay in Warwickshire; and who if he were not the best-tempered fellow in the world, would drink confusion to Peter and his Barley-growing brethren of Norfolk, and the Hop-growers of Kent into the bargain, every time he puts a glass of *treble-taxed* Beer to his lips.

The Oat-grower of the Lincolnshire Fens must not grumble forsooth at the tribute he pays to the Dairymen of Cheshire, Gloucester, Wilts, and Somerset, because he makes their Landlords pay it back again in the duty he levies on every bushel of oats they give to their Hunters or Cart-horses. We have established amongst ourselves a system of mutual pillage and deception, in which the Landlord and Farmer do not gain by any, while the poor Labourer suffers by all. His only capital are his thews and sinews; and the more Food and Raiment he can get for their loan, the better for him. The preposterous assumption that their value rises and falls with the price of wheat, would be too

much honoured by a new refutation. It might as well be said that the price of Locomotives rises and falls with the price of Coke—*because they consume it!* Hands, like every other production of nature, are valuable as they are in request, and must be paid for accordingly.

But we must not wander amongst the tombs of arguments that are out of date. Like the Cuckoo in July, their note where it is not extinguished is so flattened as to be intolerable to every ear attuned to the truthful harmonies of Nature. Our business is with the Future, not the Past. Indeed the bare enunciation of the Text that the English Agriculturist must begin to think whether he cannot manufacture Corn cheap enough to undersell the foreigner in his own market, is a monster proposition of such voracious look, that it must either, like Aaron's rod, swallow up all the others, or be swallowed itself. It gives and takes no quarter. It either exterminates every vestige of the old doctrines about keeping up prices, or they must all come back together, and like the poisoned monarch push the usurper from the throne. But they must first 'make the river run backward to its source' instead of onward to the ocean, by falsifying every principle deduced from the experience of other manufactures: for the Anomaly of Agriculture cannot stand alone.

"We would exhort those," say Mr. Morton and Mr. Trimmer, at the conclusion of their elaborate and able investigation into the effects of the Corn Laws—"in whom the approaching

destruction of the 'protective' system excites such terror, to calculate for themselves the extent to which these duties increase the cost of cultivation and the value of returns under that system of farming with which they are best acquainted. We have supplied some data; the rest they possess themselves. They cannot enter fairly on the calculation without being convinced that to the Tenant, the System is on the whole more injurious than beneficial; that to the labourer it is decidedly detrimental; that no one can gain by it but the Landlord; that *he cannot be permanently benefitted by that which injures the tenant and the labourer*; that he often loses on one description of land what he seems to gain on another; that his utmost supposed gains are *not to be compared with those which he would derive from the Security conferred on Agricultural pursuits by NATURAL PRICES*; the increased confidence and energy that would attend them; the INCREASED CAPITAL that would flow into them; and the *increased Produce raised at diminished cost*, which these would call forth."

But these supposed gains on the part of the Landlord are worse than imaginary. Let any man who has watched the rise and fall of the Share-market, or the Corn-market, or of the value of 'Stock,' whether Commercial or Agricultural, say what one thing that he knows, has the most fatally depreciating effect upon property of every kind and description? His answer will be, that of all other causes the panic-feeling of APPREHENSION is the most ruinously and *unreasonably* depressing. Let any Banker at the head of his Clerks, let any Commander at the head of his Army, let any human being raised above his fellow-men by the possession of Capital, Command, or Responsibility (and the first entails the other two) say what thing he dreads most,

as exercising over men's minds a power the most difficult to control or reason down? His answer will be the same. And who stands in a position more obnoxious to these influences than the Landlord? From the moment that he made his property the subject of Legislative 'protection' it has been the very sport of Parliament. Session after Session, as surely as the year came round, came Mr. Villiers with his lengthening minorities and speeches for "Repeal of the Corn Laws." The very sound of the words hung, like the Sword of Damocles, over every acre in Britain: and the fears of men, greater in proportion to their ignorance of the nature and extent of the possible calamity that approached them, beheld afar the coming evil with the magnifying distortion said to exist in the Horse's eye. No form of words was too comprehensively threatening, to paraphrase the expression—no collateral mischief too remote to be included in the overwhelming and national ruin that was to follow the expulsion from our Statute-book of this childish invention that was to regulate the most important commerce of the world, the Corn-trade of Britain, by the 'political acupuncture' of a joiner's rule. Its utter and signal failure in practice, freshly and increasingly developed in each succeeding year, whether of dearth or plenty, eluded notice solely from its intricacy and complication: like the renowned General Tom Thumb, it became great by its very littleness; and men willingly wore other men's opinions on the subject, like a Livery, from the hopeless trouble or

sheer impossibility of forming one of their own. The panic-cry of 'The Danes!' in the ears of our Saxon Ancestors was not more hateful or terrific, though much more reasonable, than that of 'Abolition of the Corn Laws!' to their gregarious descendants: and both will live in the after-pages of the Philosophy of History as memorable testimonies of the permanency of error, the influence of an obstinate and groundless fear, and of *the power of one bold mind* to dispel it like a dream. Of all the interests of the State, the Property of the Landlord was the most injured by the delusion that gave the power to this fatal and perpetual cry: whilst with the pertinacity, but not the knowledge of the Spartan boy, he hugged to his breast the fox that was preying upon his vitals. Those who have resided or travelled in ill-governed Countries (blessed be God, the Englishman must travel for that experience!) know that of all depreciating influences on the Value of land, insecurity of Tenure through liability to State interference, is the most withering. In Portugal and Spain this constant apprehension cuts at the root of all improvement, investment, and enjoyment. Like the English Tenant-at-Will, the Proprietor feels, under such a government, more like the wandering Bedouin or the nomad Scythian, than like a man who can reside, enjoy and bequeath, and the aspect of their Estates, though of matchless fertility, is a reflecting mirror of the demon-face of Insecurity. Next in mischief to the fear of what a Government will do, is the fear of

what it will undo. Parliament *could*——ABOLISH THE CORN LAWS! Why then the supposed value of every estate in the kingdom was balanced upon the annual “Yes” or “No” of the Legislature; for its honest value, whether to hold or sell, was *its value to let*; (or Hudibras was very much mistaken.) Can any man doubt for a moment that when Parliament has ‘done its worst’—if that worst be found to be the very kindest thing it could do, (to put the proposition with modest hypothesis)—that every acre of every estate in the kingdom will be relieved from the groundless apprehensions of its cultivator and proprietor, and like an inverted equation, change the ‘minus’ term to ‘plus’? Will not property that is *Parliament-proof* be worth more than that which was not, or what is effectively the same conceived itself not to be, so? The apprehension itself, putting out of sight its truth or error, was a depressing influence on the value of property (from the very constitution of men’s minds) more serious than could be caused by a very considerable change in the market value of the produce; and the recovery from this typhoid prostration, would be no light account to credit against any reasonable fulfilment of the alarmist-prophecies. Sensitive as the pulse of the market may be, *men’s minds* are more so, and the apprehension of evil is ever more cruel in its effects than the evil itself, when it comes, if it ever do. The shadows that coming events cast before them are of monstrous dimensions: but the

wise man while ‘preparing for the worst’ will ‘hope for the best,’ and not run away till he see what the dimension of the substance itself may be ; what manner of beast the mountain will bring forth. The looming of this same portentous shadow, the long-protracted labour-throes of this mountain have been injurious to the land-owner from the most conflicting causes : for while one half the world was blaming him for not giving Leases to his Tenants, the other half was advising responsible Tenants not to accept them ; and the number of wealthy applicants for a vacant farm was diminished by the general and natural reluctance to invest Capital in a pursuit made irregular and unbusinesslike by Act of Parliament.

The Channel-Islands have long furnished almost *a model* of the British Isles as they would be, and as they will be, under an unfettered Corn-trade. They are allowed to send all their home-grown Corn to us, and to import for their own consumption an unlimited supply Duty-free. And what is the aspect of Agriculture, and the Rent of Land, there ? In the first place, their Farming is what Dame Quickly would call “a thing to thank God upon !” The Dwarf sets an example that the Giant might follow. The ‘Jersey-plough’ walks into the ground and turns you over *twelve* statute inches of mortal soil with an ease that would make the five-inch-teazing English ploughman rend his smock-frock with agony, to behold. Their acres are limited in width, so they *increase*

them downwards. ‘And what’ ——— stop a moment,—I know what you are going to ask ——— ‘What is the Rent of land there?’ Far beyond what it is in England. Drain and Subsoil your own, and let your Tenants farm as they do, and you will see *why*. You will find that by doubling the depth of your cultivated soil, you may *increase your estate* and lessen your Poor-Rates.

Puzzling and deceptive as the restricted Corn-trade has been to the Farmer, cruel as it has been to the Labourer, its ultimate and cumulative hardship has fallen where every weight falls in the end, upon the Landlord. To him its fatal illusion, that “kept the word of promise to the ear and broke it to the hope,” has been like a perpetual blister. Even the most intelligent applicant for a farm, who knew best how little was to be feared from ‘foreign competition,’ and had slyly read during some long winter’s evening Mr. Meek’s collected Reports from the Corn-exporting countries of Europe, declaring with one voice *that they already sent us all they could, and if we want more we must send them the money to grow it*—and had watched with prescient eye the gradual conversion, over Europe, of Corn-exporting into Corn-importing countries, whilst the produce of our own was actually overtaking our enormous population and beginning to shew *the table-turning symptoms of diminishing price against an increasing demand*;—even such a man as this knew his own interest too well not to brandish before his intended Landlord’s eyes the

lowered price of corn as an unanswerable argument for a lower Rent, wisely suppressing the erroneous postulate which the Squire took for a granted axiom, to wit, that ‘Corn and Rent *must* fall together.’ And ‘if such things were done in the green, what should be done in the dry?’ if the rich Tenant was wise enough to wink at a national blunder which hurt him the less the more the Squire believed it, what should the poor one do who was constrained to sell in a glutted market his Michaelmas Wheat to pay his Michaelmas Rent, to whom reaping, threshing, selling and paying, were one continuous operation? Little knew he while he was cracking the cheeks of his winnowing-machine, to blow the dust out of his corn, and looking with fond credulity at *the August prices*, that there was *another machine at work* that would blow the dust back into his own eyes when *that second week in September* should come upon him, and with it the clearing out of every Bonded Warehouse in England, discharging upon the early market of the *poorer* farmer, the whole foreign accumulations of the year in “one little week.”

“Heu! quoties Fidem

Mutatosque deos flebit, et aspera

Nigris æquora ventis

Emirabitur insolens,

Qui nunc te fruitur credulus AUREÂ,

Qui *semper auream*, semper amabilem

Sperat, NESCIUS AURÆ

FALLACIS!”

Alas! how oft the faithless tale,
 The altered looks, shall he bewail!
 The ruffled wave 'neath lowering gale *
 Who, love-lost, wondering sees!

Though now he clasps thy *golden* form!
 And *ever golden*, ever warm,
 Still fondly hopes thee, recks not harm!
 Nor knows the fickle breeze!

But if the Landowner was the last to be convinced, he will be the first to be benefited, for Capital has quick ears for a sure Investment: tired of wandering to and fro, 'gathering' but little 'moss' upon the Railways, we shall soon see it give up travelling to the young and *inexperienced*, to settle down upon the goodly acres at home, and become a 'respectable country gentleman.' They need him, and will be grateful to him, Heaven knows! Ask any Landlord, wise or simple, what is the whip that speeds the plough, what is the manure that doubles the crop of his best Tenants? his answer will be, CAPITAL! but who will freight his goods in a vessel that sails under false colours? Who will invest his fortune where he dare not take a Lease? The competition for Farms is great, but count out the applicants, and you will find it is the competition of Poverty not of Capital. Send your agent to assess the Rent at a 'Fair Valuation:' his report will be a blind guess-work of "proviso and exception" upon Corn-law contingencies, upon the tender mercies of Parliamentary 'Protection,' which like

* Query 'Sliding Scale?'—*Printer's Devil*.

the vampyre fans its dreaming victim with the insidious breath of hope, while it draws away the source of life.

Is there no Protection in NATURE? Can the frail device of man protect more surely than HE can, who with unerring Wisdom and Beneficence has constituted the free intercourse of Nations, by the reciprocal interests and benefits of commerce, to be the Forge in which the Sword shall be beaten into the Plough-share? And shall we who have used so well the elder weapon, shrink coward-like from the nobler encounter, with every advantage on our side, and every good presage to cheer us on? We have crouched to the earth long enough, under this imaginary cannonade of Bread-balls from the batteries of 'the foreigner,' but the same spirit still lives which responded to the electric words that gave the welcome relief, and the same voice still speaks to give the altered charge—

“Up FARMERS! and at 'em!”